Department of State TELEGRAM

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10-21-67 Saigon 9180

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TO SECSTATE WASHDC 9337
INFO AMEMBASSY BANGKOK 4646
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C O N F I D E N T I A L SAIGON 9180

CINCPAC FOR POLAD

SUBJECT: LOWER HOUSE ELECTIONS: COASTAL II CORPS

REF: SAIGON 9088

1. A LAST-MINUTE SURVEY OF THE ELECTION CONTEST FOR THE 15 VIETNAMESE SEATS AT STAKE IN THE FIVE PROVINCES OF COASTAL II CORPS AND CAM RANH CITY INDICATED THAT CANDIDATES BACKED BY CATHOLICS OR BUDDHISTS DOMINATE THE FIELD. THERE ARE

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BETWEEN 35 AND 40 CANDIDATES WHO APPEAR TO BE CLEARLY LEADING CONTENDERS: OF THESE, ABOUT ONE THIRD ARE CATHOLICS AND ABOUT ONE THIRD HAVE THE ENDORSEMENT OF LOCAL CHAPTERS OF THE UNITED BUDDHIST ASSOCIATION. EACH GROUP MAY BE EXPECTED TO

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WIN BETWEEN 4 AND 8 SEATS. CATHOLIC STRENGTH IS OF COURSE TO BE EXPECTED, BUT THE PRESENCE OF A LARGE NUMBER OF CANDIDATES OFFICIALLY OR UNOFFICIALLY BACKED BY THE UBA IS SIGNIFICANT IN VIEW OF THE BUDDHIST BOYCOTT OF THE CA ELECTIONS AND THE VACILLATION OF TRI QUANG ORIENTED BUDDHISTS PRIOR TO THE PRESIDENTIAL ELECTIONS. ALTHOUGH THE BUDDHIST-ENDORSED CANDIDATES IN THE RACE DO NOT APPEAR TO BE A PARTICULARLY RADICAL GROUP, SOME DO HAVE A RECORD OF ACTIVE "STRUGGLE" ACTIVITY AND THEWINNERS AMONG THEM WILL PROVIDE A VOICE FOR BUDDHIST INTERESTS IN THE LOWER HOUSE.

2. THE VAST MAJORITY OF THE LOWERHOUSE DELEGATES FROM COASTAL II CORPS APPEAR CERTAIN TO BE NEW FACES. OF THE TOTAL OF 14 DEPUTIES WHO REPRESENTED THE AREA IN THE CONSTITUENT ASSEMBLY, ONLY 6 ARE IN THIS YEARS RACE. NONE RAN IN PHU AN AND CAM RANH. ONLY THREE APPEAR TO BE STRONG CONTENDERS (NOANG NGOC CAN, KHANH HOA; NGUYEN DUY CUNG, BINH THUEN; AND THANH GIAO, CHAM, ALSO OF DINH THUEN) AND OF THESE ONLY GIAO SEEMS A SURE WINNER. AS ELSEWHERE, CA DEPUTIES IN COASTAL II CORPS APPEAR VULNERABLE

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TO THE CHARGE THAT THEY "WENT OFF TO SAIGON AND DID NOTHING FOR THE PEOPLE" AFTER THEIR ELECTION.

3. TWO CA REPRESENTATIVES WHO ARE CATHOLICS HAVE BEEN DUMPED BY LOCAL CATHOLIC ORGANIZATIONS IN BINH DINH AND KHANH HOA FOR NOT HAVING PRESSED HARD FOR THE INSERTION OF A "SUPREME BEING" CLAUSE IN THE CONSTITUTION. NEITHER ARE STILL IN THE CONTEST.

4. WITH THE BUDDHISTS PARTICIPATING IN THIS ELECTION CAMPAIGN SO ACTIVELY, COMPETITION IS MUCH STIFFER THAN IT WAS FOR THE CA. GP-3 BUNKER

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